

Checklist of the Lepidoptera North of Mexico.

Hodges, Ronald W. et al., 1983. E. W. Classey and the Wedge Entomological Research Foundation. ISBN 086096-016-1, xxiv + 284 pp. Price: \$88.00, paperback.

What, after all, can one say about the appearance of new faunal lists or catalogues, except to note that they have arrived. This particular monograph, however, really is noteworthy as it stands as printed proof that not all inflation has been brought under control in the last few years. Indeed, this recent volume in the burgeoning *Moths of North America* series offers us inflation on two fronts.

The first inflationary assault is in the form of yet another slightly adjusted version of Miller and Brown's much discussed butterfly nomenclature (pp. 42-65). This nomenclature, championed by but a handful, has rapidly invaded our libraries—the butterfly portion of this work completing a nomenclatural trilogy of sorts with *The Butterflies of the Rocky Mountain States* (Ferris and Brown, 1981, University of Oklahoma Press) and *A Catalogue/Checklist of the Butterflies of America North of Mexico* (Miller and Brown, 1981, Lep. Soc. Mem. No. 2). Miller's avowed distaste for the use of subgenera (Miller and Brown, 1981, p. v) has led to a decidedly uneven treatment in the subject of this review as in the two previous publications. A number of weakly differentiated species groups are raised to the generic level (for instance those within *Euphydryas*) while arguably "better" species groups (e.g., *Erynnides* within *Erynnis*) are not so treated.

But the butterfly nomenclature presented curiously differs from Miller and Brown's (1981) sibling treatment. A sampling of the more egregious fractioning of genera has been rectified (although whether this list, in fact, preceded the 1981 checklist is not clear). *Papilio* and *Eurema*, for example, have been reconstituted. Nonetheless, much unwarranted fragmenting of long-accepted genera remains. This includes acceptance of biologically unjustified treatments at the species level (e.g., recognizing the ethereal *Mitoura* species "rosneri", "barryi", and "byrnei"), at the generic level (e.g., recognizing the extremely closely-related species groups within *Lycaena*, "Chalceria", *Hylolycaena*, and "Gaeides"), and at the family level (in contrast, see most recently Ackery [Chapter 1 in *The Biology of Butterflies*, 1984, Academic Press] for a balanced treatment consistent with available evidence). And, since this treatment lacks the notes, dates, and other information of the previous Miller and Brown (1981) butterfly list, this one is effectively worthless.

I hardly would venture to critique the taxonomic treatments for the moths which comprise the bulk of this catalogue, but, at the very least, the contributing authors are a first rate lot. The most recent inclusive checklist of the North American moths (McDunnough, 1938, Mem. So. Cal. Acad. Sci., Vol. 1) was nearing its golden anniversary, thus an updating certainly was necessary. But, while moth specialists need not wade through the morass of rather mystical treatments that face butterfly taxonomists, understanding of the basic structure of the moth component of ditrysian relationships is still very much in flux indeed (as one can see in interesting introductory remarks on the Pyralidae, p. xvii, and Geometridae, p. xviii, and, for example in the placement of the genus *Ellabella* in no less than five separate families by various workers, Heppner, 1984, J. Res. Lepid. 23:50-73). That is not to suggest that all energies have been diverted to higher taxonomic

placement for the moths and that the moth arena is free of nomenclatural fisticuffs. The editor of this checklist himself has spoken to taxonomic inflation in the moths, in what might be expected to be the last frontier, the Microlepidoptera (Hodges, 1982, *J. Lepid. Soc.* 36:216-217).

Now, none of the aforementioned nomenclatural inflation necessarily makes a real case, pro or con, for this book; however the other, real dollars and cents inflation, certainly does. No, this is not a typo. That's right, eighty-eight dollars. . . for 284 pages. Almost a hundred bucks for a paperback—no text, no figures, no tables—just a list. Well, not *just* a list, in the sense that this is an important working document to which all lepidopterists *should* have access. At this price they simply will not.

And we thought twenty-five dollars was a bit rugged for the initial offering in this series—158 pages plus plates on the Sphingidae! The stratospheric price for this list of Lepidoptera causes a recurrence of what is known as the "D'Abbrera Effect", which was the result of having to scrape oneself off the floor after realizing that forty dollars got you 417 pages of Australian Region butterflies in 1977, and one hundred forty dollars gets you 244 pages of Oriental Region butterflies today. These are hardly isolated cases—try *The Genus Agrias: A Taxonomic and Illustrated Guide* (Barselou, 1983, E. W. Classey), 96 pages for \$57.50, *The Large White Butterfly* (Feltwell, 1981, Junk Pubs.), 542 pages (virtually all text) for \$98.00, perhaps *A Monograph of the Birdwing Butterflies* (Haugum and Low, 1979), 277 pages (paper!) for \$100.00. . . or the ultimate deal, LeMoult and Real (1962, E. W. Classey) on *Les Morphos*, about three hundred pages plus plates (mostly black and white), paperback, only \$250.00.

Publishers have made a clear decision, and the decision does not include us. Sell several hundred atrociously over-priced copies of a checklist to the institutions that must have it and to the very few individuals that can afford it, versus the very real option of halving the price and more than doubling the sales of what would still be a grossly over-priced book. But they don't give a damn about us. Which is why my advice is straightforward. Don't buy this thing. Short of putting myself in conspiracy of copyright violation, I suggest that you know how to get this book. It will run you about fifteen dollars and you can bind it to coordinate with your sofa. And if you feel guilty, you can leave the "Do not remove under penalty of law" tag on the matching eiderdown pillow you bought with all the money you saved. Let us hope they get the message.

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